

## Summary

### Main Features

#### BACKGROUND

1. The concept of Usual Residence underpins many statistical collections. As households, families and income units are formed on the basis of usual residence, it is fundamental to the measurement of the full range of variables associated with these units. The concept is also essential to the operational procedures for the scope and coverage rules of household surveys. For this reason the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has undertaken a comprehensive review of the concept and its application to statistical collections.

2. There is obvious advantage therefore to standardising the concept of Usual Residence. It has proved impractical, however, to devise a single standard concept of Usual Residence that satisfies the full range of analytical requirements of users and operational exigencies of ABS collections. This paper details the two concepts of Usual Residence used in the ABS, it explains why two concepts are necessary, when and how the concepts are used, the effect of using the two concepts and describes the method in which the two concepts are used.

#### THE CONCEPT OF USUAL RESIDENCE

##### TWO CONCEPTS OF USUAL RESIDENCE ARE USED IN THE ABS

3. The vast majority of people in Australia live in either a private dwelling such as a house or flat, or a non-private dwelling such as a hotel, guest house, boarding house or charitable institution.

4. The concept of Usual Residence, in simple terms, is the dwelling a person calls home and resides in on a permanent basis. In most circumstances this makes determining a person's usual residence straightforward.

5. The concept of Usual Residence is based on the fact that each person has a basic attachment to a particular dwelling. However, this concept embodies two forms of attachment:

- Attachment to the dwelling in which a person lives the majority of the time, known as 'Usual Residence in a Dwelling' or 'UR 1', and
- Attachment to the dwelling which a person considers to be their family home, known as 'Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home' or 'UR 2'.

6. As the majority of people live in their family home the majority of the time the same dwelling constitutes their usual residence in both cases.

##### WHY TWO CONCEPTS ARE USED

7. Two concepts of Usual Residence are necessary in order to meet the two main purposes for which 'Usual Residence' data are used:

- Attachment to the dwelling in which a person lives the majority of the time (Usual Residence in a Dwelling) is the concept used in the Census of Population and Housing (the Census). In operational terms it is the dwelling at which a person spends 6 months or more in a year. The concept is used for producing estimates of the usual resident population by geographic area. These estimates are used as the basis for allocating resources. In particular, population estimates based on the Census are used to

determine the number of seats allocated to each State and Territory in the House of Representatives and also for the allocation of Financial Assistance Grants by the Australian Government to the States and Territories.

- Attachment to the dwelling which a person considers to be their Usual Residence (Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home) is the concept used in the Monthly Population Survey (MPS) and most other ABS household surveys. It is used for the collection and output of data for units of analysis such as households, families and income units. In operational terms, it is the dwelling a person perceives to be his/her home.

## **DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTS**

### **Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1)**

8. Usual Residence in a Dwelling is defined as 'the dwelling (address) at which a person has lived or intends to live for a total of six months or more in a calendar year'.

9. This form of Usual Residence is concerned with attachment to a physical place; a geographic location. It is based on an objective time criterion. It designates a person's usual residence to be the dwelling they live in most of the time, six months or more in a year, even if they do not regard it as their home and do not have a strong social, economic or familial attachment to it.

### **Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home (UR2)**

10. Usual Residence in a Household is defined as the dwelling (address) that the person regards as their 'home'.

11. This concept of Usual Residence involves not only a person's attachment to a dwelling in a physical sense, but also embodies social, economic and familial attachment to a dwelling because it contains their household or family home. This form of attachment allows a person to be considered as a usual resident of the dwelling in which their family home is located even if they do not live there the majority of the time. It is based on self perception.

## **WHEN AND HOW THE CONCEPTS ARE USED**

### **Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1)**

12. The primary purpose of this concept of Usual Residence is to calculate the usually resident population of an area and to facilitate the provision of statistics about internal migration patterns at the State and regional level.

13. This concept of Usual Residence is important when producing statistics which aim to examine resource allocation or service delivery on the basis of how many people usually live in an area. There is a long time series of data available based on this concept.

14. For instance a university student who lives away from home in a university residence during university terms will be living in the residence for more than six months of the year. It will be necessary for services to be provided in the area on the basis of how many people usually live in the area. This is irrespective of whether or not people regard the dwelling they live in there as their 'home'.

### **Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home (UR2)**

15. A significant focus of government policy and service provision activity is aimed at providing support to families. In informing policy debate the implementation of the Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1) concept is restrictive: it may ignore significant and very real social and economic relationships of a household as it can impose a spatial border around household members which disguises the household's true social and economic relationships. For instance, in the case of the university student who lives away from home during university terms, the student may reside in a hall of residence, stay with a relative or friend, become a member of a group household or live alone in a private dwelling while still remaining financially dependant on his or her parents who live in a different dwelling, possibly some distance away.

16. Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home (UR2) is most appropriate for the measurement of the full range of variables associated with households, families and income units, since these statistical units are formed from those persons who perceive they are usual residents of a family home. Tracing individuals back to their family home has clear benefits in terms of determining household and family composition, and income unit type. This information is essential for identifying and providing services to individuals and families.

## THE EFFECT OF USING TWO CONCEPTS OF USUAL RESIDENCE

17. In order to determine the effect of using two concepts of Usual Residence a comparison was made of the numbers and percentages of Couple and One parent family households in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which uses the Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home concept (UR2) and the Census which is based on Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1).

18. As Table 1 (below) shows for the last three censuses, the Census marginally underestimated the proportion of Couple families relative to LFS estimates for August 1991, 1996 and 2001, and overestimated the proportion of One parent families. The Census also marginally overestimated the proportion of Other families for both 1996 and 2001. Table 2 shows that for 1991, 1996 and 2001 the Census has slightly undercounted the total number of families relative to LFS. These differences are not consistent over time, particularly across counts of One parent families and Other families. The large difference between the LFS estimates and the Census counts in 1991 results from the different definitions of One parent family used in the two collections. It was not until 1994 that the LFS redefined Other families comprising a lone parent with non dependent children only as One parent families. This definition already applied in the 1991 Census. It is probable that the remaining marginal differences are not entirely due to the effect of using UR1 in the Census and UR2 in LFS. Differences in methodology, scope, benchmarks, methods of adjusting for non-response and family coding are also likely to have impacted on the total number and the types of families over and under counted. So while there are minor differences between the Census and survey data, these would have been expected even if the same approach to Usual Residence had been taken in both collection vehicles.

**TABLE 1. COMPARISON BY PERCENTAGES**

<b>Couple Families</b>				
%	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	85.53	83.72	82.75	
LFS (b)	85.55	83.89	83.06	
Difference (a-b)	-0.02	-0.17	-0.31	
<b>One parent families</b>				
%	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	12.84	14.45	15.44	
LFS (b)	8.46	14.42	15.24	
Difference (a-b)	4.38	0.03	0.20	
<b>Other Families</b>				
%	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	1.86	1.80	1.80	
LFS (b)	5.99	1.68	1.68	
Difference (a-b)	-4.13	0.12	0.12	

**TABLE 2. COMPARISON BY POPULATION NUMBERS**

<b>Couple Families</b>				
'000	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	3677	3898	4085	
LFS (b)	3844	4036	4350	
Difference (a-b)	-167	-138	-265	
<b>One Parent Families</b>				
'000	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	552	673	762	
LFS(b)	380	694	798	
Difference (a-b)	172	-21	-36	
<b>Other Families</b>				
'000	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	80	84	89	
LFS(b)	269	81	88	
Difference (c)	-189	3	1	
<b>Total Families</b>				
'000	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	
Census (a)	4299	4656	4936	
LFS (b)	4493	4811	5237	
Difference (a-b)	-194	-155	-301	

## METHODS

19. While for most people both Usual Residence in a Dwelling and Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home will result in the same dwelling being reported as the person's Usual Residence, for statistical purposes it is necessary to deal consistently with instances where an individual resides in more than one dwelling on a regular basis. In such instances there may be a conflict between the individual's own concept of their usual residence and any objective criteria.

### TREATMENT OF PERSONS WHO REGULARLY RESIDE IN MORE THAN ONE DWELLING

20. There are a number of instances where individuals may regularly reside in more than one dwelling and for whom Usual Residence in a Dwelling and Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home may be different. These include:

- 'Fly-in-fly out' workers who reside for a fixed period usually of 2-3 weeks at a mining camp, construction site, oil rig or similar in a locality which is distant from their home.
- Workers whose jobs are based long term in a locality outside daily commuting distance from their home but who have not moved their main residence, usually for reasons such as extended family ties or a desire not to disrupt their children's education. These situations usually involve weekend and holiday commuting.
- Workers such as travelling sales representatives and politicians whose jobs require frequent regular travel away from home
- Retired people who spend lengthy periods away from home typically in winter, to take advantage of warmer, dryer weather. This may involve staying in holiday type accommodation (rented or owned) on a long term basis or moving regularly from one location to another using either holiday accommodation or a mobile home.
- People who spend parts of the year living with different relatives. In most cases these people will maintain a permanent home base either independently or with a particular relative.
- Children whose parents live in separate dwellings and the children spend part of their time in each dwelling.
- Homeless and itinerant people who do not have a permanent address or home base.

21. Conceptually, some of these cases could result in a person being double counted. In cases where information is collected directly from the individual concerned and relates to a specific point in time, the information obtained is likely to be accurate. However where information is collected from a third party there may be problems. In the case of a child who lives for two weeks with one parent followed by two weeks living with the other parent both, parents may regard their dwelling as the child's home and report that the child is a usual resident of that dwelling.

22. In the case of ABS surveys where information may be collected from the same dwelling for a number of months, it is possible that both parents' dwellings will be included in the survey and both parents will report that their dwelling is the child's Usual Residence.

23. Following the Census, which is a self enumerated collection, a Post Enumeration Survey is undertaken. Trained interviewers interview a sample of dwellings to ascertain if the information provided was in fact correct, and that all persons who were reported as spending Census night at the dwelling were in fact there rather than absent, but had been included on the form because they usually lived there.

### Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1)

24. In the case of the Census which requires information on the Usual Residence in a Dwelling (UR1) basis the question asked in the 2001 Census was:

Where does the person usually live?

- For persons who usually live in another country and who are visiting Australia for less than one year,

mark 'Other country'.

- For other persons, 'usually live' means that address at which the person has lived or intends to live for a total of six months or more in 2001.
- For persons who now have no usual address, write 'no usual address'.
- For boarders at boarding school, give address at boarding school or college.

### **Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home (UR2)**

25. In the Monthly Population Survey, and other household surveys information is required on the Usual Residence in a Household or Family Home (UR2) basis. The interviewer asks the householder:

'What are the names of all the people who usually live here?', followed by:

'Will any of these people be staying away tonight?'.

26. If the respondent answers 'yes', the interviewer then asks:

'Will [name of person] be away for more than six weeks altogether?'

27. If the respondent answers 'yes' the person is excluded. If the respondent answers 'no' the person is included.

28. By asking these questions it ensures that if a person is considered to be a usual resident of the selected private dwelling then he/she is listed as such by the interviewer. The relevant coverage questions are then asked to establish whether the person should be included or excluded from the rest of the survey questions.

29. This means that if a person is perceived as a 'usual resident', but is absent for more than six weeks, he/she will not be included in the survey, but will retain his/her usual resident status and will be included in household (family) coding.

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## **About this Release**

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